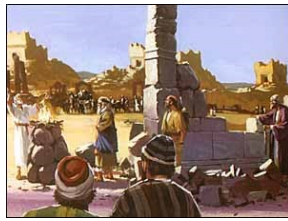


Zechariah: The “Major” Minor Prophet

Haggai was not alone in prophesying to the Jews who had returned to Jerusalem. Along with Haggai, God also sent the prophet Zechariah to exhort the people to complete the rebuilding of the Temple. Haggai’s message was short yet stern. Zechariah’s message was longer (in fact, Zechariah is the longest of the Minor Prophets), but filled with great encouragement. This is not the first time God used two prophets with various approaches to speak to the people. Between Haggai and Zechariah, however, there was success. The people listened to their words and rekindled their zeal to build the temple, and they were able to complete the rebuilding project. While the primary goal of these men’s message was to exhort the people in building God’s house, there were other important messages contained within. Especially in Zechariah, God provides a message of hope and true restoration. Not because the physical temple would be built, but because God was sending a Messiah to establish an everlasting kingdom. Zechariah’s message is especially focused on this message. In fact, of all the prophets, only Isaiah has more to say about the coming of the Messiah than Zechariah. When you consider that Isaiah is roughly four times longer than Zechariah, that shows just how focused Zechariah’s messianic message was! Here are just a few of the Messianic prophecies and allusions found in Zechariah:



The Righteous Branch (3:8; 6:12-13)

The Priest-King (6:13)

The King Arriving on a Donkey (9:9)

The Cornerstone (10:4)

The Shepherd Slaughtered by the Sheep (11:4-7)

Sold for 30 Pieces of Silver (11:11)

The Pierced One (12:10)

The Coming Judge and King (14)

Glory in the Temple

One of the things that discouraged the people while rebuilding the temple, was the realization that the new temple would pale in comparison to the glorious building that Solomon had erected. Just laying the foundation made it clear the new would be much inferior to the old. And yet, Haggai says, “The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts.” God was emphatic that this new Temple would actually outshine the glory of the old. This was part of the encouragement found in both Haggai’s and Zechariah’s messages. But how could this be? The answer is Jesus! While Solomon’s Temple was a grand and beautiful building by human standards, it was the rebuilt Temple that Jesus would actually come to. When Jesus came, the glory of God was truly manifest in its greatest sense. That’s why John says “and we beheld His glory” in the prologue of his gospel. The glory of God had never filled the Temple as fully as when Jesus was present. Sadly, most people rejected the glory of God that was manifest in Jesus. Most would rather a grand and beautiful edifice. Today, are we more concerned with outward appearances, or are we truly seeking the glory of God that is found in His Son?



“That You May Grow Thereby...”

A weekly Bible reading plan



Haggai & Zechariah 1-8 Post-Exilic Prophets: Part 1

Overview

This week we return to the final section of the Old Testament. At the end of the section known as the “Minor Prophets” are three special books of prophecy. The books of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi are all prophetic messages that take place after the return from Babylonian captivity. During the time of return and restoration, God’s people needed guidance, admonition, rebuke, and encouragement. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah tell the history of this time-frame; Haggai and Zechariah (and later Malachi) are the prophets that served during this period. Their messages helped the remnant return to action and service. Haggai and Zechariah were particularly focused on encouraging the people to continue and complete the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. Further, these post-exilic prophets provided messages of hope and future glory in the coming of God’s promised Messiah!

Suggested Reading Schedule

Monday: Haggai 1-2

Tuesday: Zechariah 1-2

Wednesday: Zechariah 3-4

Thursday: Zechariah 5-6

Friday: Zechariah 7-8

Paneled Houses & Temple Ruins

The Persian King Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 B.C., and within a year had decreed the Jews could return to their homeland and rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. What a time of rejoicing that must have been. The period of judgment and punishment was over, and God’s people could return home! Excitedly, many Jews followed Zerubbabel back to Jerusalem to begin the reconstruction. At first, it seems all were excited to begin the project of rebuilding, and of course rebuilding the Temple was a key priority. Nearly two-decades later, the Temple hadn’t been rebuilt, and construction had completely stopped. Haggai accuses the people of leaving the Temple “in ruins” (1:4). Excitement had waned, various difficulties discouraged the people, and more than anything personal priorities took precedence. Haggai says the people dwell in paneled houses while God’s house was still in ruins. They had their excuses, but the simple fact was they placed their desires above serving God. They had already forgotten the lessons they had learned in captivity. Once more, a prophet was needed to lead the people back to godly service. Haggai’s brief message is all about exhorting the people to return to their work of rebuilding the Temple. Until they did, they could not expect God’s continued blessing. God had remembered His covenant and delivered the people, but they needed to remember the covenant also, and rebuild the temple to have a place to worship God.

Sometimes, we might be more like the people of Haggai’s day than we realize. While we are not called to build or worship at a physical temple in Jerusalem, sometimes we too are guilty of “dwelling in paneled houses” while God’s house “lies in ruins;” at least spiritually speaking. If we place our own comfort, desires, and goals ahead of serving God and the kingdom of Christ, then we have made the same mistake as the Jews of Haggai’s days. Don’t put off spiritual needs until you’ve accomplished secular and physical goals—put serving the Lord first and work for Him above all else!

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Haggai & Zechariah 1-8

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